

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI BENI PRASAD VARMA) : (a) and (b) The telecommunication services in rural areas of Uttar Pradesh are working satisfactorily. However, the telecom services which are connected on less reliable media like overhead alignment/carrier systems etc. are being progressively replaced by reliable media such as Optical Fibre Cable (OFC), Ultra High Frequency (UHF), Multi Channel Per Carrier (MCPC), Very Small Aperture Satellite (V-SAT) terminals etc. Performance of Village Public Telephones (VPTs) is being closely monitored at different levels and efforts are also being made to improve the working and to replace faulty/irreparable Village Public Telephones (VPTs) in the rural areas, where required.

(c) The plan allocation for Department of Telecommunications as a whole for the year 1997-98 is Rs. 10766 crores out of which a sum of Rs. 625.68 crores is proposed for improving telecom facilities in Uttar Pradesh. The allocation for rest of the periods for ninth five year plan shall be finalised in due course.

Gauge Conversion

1537. SHRI PARASRAM MEGHWAL : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Union Government have contemplated any proposal to convert Udaipur-Jodhpur railway line into broad gauge in near futures;

(b) if so, the time by which the above line is likely to be converted; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Gauge conversion work is in progress in Jodhpur-Marwar and Udaipur-Chittaurgarh sections which when completed will provide a BG route between Udaipur and Jodhpur. A survey for conversion of Mavli-Marwar has also been taken up. Further consideration of conversion of this route will be possible once the survey report becomes available.

(c) Does not arise.

[Translation]

Broadcast of National Games on National Network

1538. SHRI K.P. SINGH DEO : Will the Minister of INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING be pleased to state :

(a) whether the time allotted for the coverage of the National Games on National Network is inadequate;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) the steps taken by the Government to give adequate coverage to such national events in future; and

(d) the norms proposed to be prescribed therefor?

THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI S. JAIPAL REDDY) : (a) to (d) It is the constant endeavour of Doordarshan to give adequate coverage to all major sports events of National importance keeping in view its other programme requirements. In pursuance of this, Doordarshan had made extensive arrangements for coverage of the recently concluded National Games. Besides covering various events live/deferred or recorded on all days, Doordarshan arranged live coverage of the Opening and Closing ceremonies of the Games. In addition, daily highlights were also telecast.

Doordarshan will continue to do so in future also.

[English]

Benefits to retired Railway Employees

1539. COL. (RETD) SONA RAM CHOUDHARY : Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that large number of benefits have been sanctioned to retired Railway employees recently including Chairman;

(b) if so, the number of such persons and annual expenditure incurred thereon, category-wise;

(c) whether grants of such benefits to retired Railway employees are covered under the Rules; and

(d) if not, the reasons for issue of such benefits?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN) : (a) During 1996-97, certain improvement was effected in travel facilities available to retired Group 'D' employees, retired Board Members, including Chairman, and retired railway employees covered under Retired Employees Liberalised Health Scheme.

(b) The number of employees benefitted under the above improvement in travel facilities and the expenditure involved are not maintained. However, the number of retired Board Members who have availed of card passes under the improved travel facility so far is only 43.

(c) Yes, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

Delay in Distribution of Letters

1540. SHRI HARIN PATHAK : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware that the delivery of letters are delayed at destination itself for more than two days; and

(b) if so, the steps taken by the Government for delivery of letters on the next day in cities of each of the States?